

(U) Ask Zelda: It's the 'P' Word

FROM: 'Zelda,' Dispenser of Advice for SIGINTers on Workplace Issues

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(U) The entire text below is unclassified.



Dear Zelda,

What would your recommendation be to a pay grade 4 when supervisors won't push for your promotion? I do an excellent job and members of the office recognize this fact. Two reasons I've received in the past [for not being promoted] are that they didn't know my job well enough and that it's been too soon since my last promotion. On the **Pebble** people discuss leaving the job [one isn't happy in], but no vacancies are advertised for my grade level.

Signed,

Forever Four

Dear "Four-ever,"

I'll bet a lot of readers out there can sympathize with your plight. At this time of year, there's more than a few people wondering, "What am I, chopped liver?" They may not all be a grade 4, but many people wish their supervisor would push harder for their promotion.

My advice to you -- and all others in your situation -- falls into two categories.

Change the Things You Can

The obvious first step is to make sure your management understands what you do. Explain your job to them and maybe send your supervisor a weekly activity report throughout the year with bullets summarizing your activities. She may not realize the extent of your duties, and you shouldn't wait until your Promotion Review Package to educate her. Volunteer for extra assignments to gain experience outside your specific area, provide an opportunity to shine, and show you are a team player.

Get a sanity check from some people whose judgment you trust. Is there something obvious preventing you from being promoted? Do you need better visibility within the organization? Is an unsavory personality trait or behavior holding you back? Objective, impartial observers might be able to help you identify things to work on in the coming year to make yourself more promotable.

If you've been in your current job for a long time, consider a detail to try out a different career field. Make a list of all the things you are good at (organizing things, dealing with people, oral communications) and think about what other positions utilize these skills. This may or may not lead to a permanent job change. Sometimes a detail to develop some new skills and broaden your experience is all it takes to push you over the top for promotion.

If you want to switch jobs but none are advertised at your grade level, put feelers out to everyone you

know for vacancies. Some positions may be open but not advertised. Investigate career development (aka intern) programs, keeping in mind your strengths and interests. Look at vacancy ads for jobs at the **next** grade level, and show evidence that you can operate at that higher grade. (This is a more important determiner of promotion readiness than time in grade.) Reading vacancy ads for the skills and knowledge expected at the next level will also give you a good target to aim for.

Accept the Things You Can't Change

Understand that it's difficult for a manager to justify promoting the same person over and over, even if they are a relatively low grade. There are probably other deserving people in the organization, and promotions are very scarce -- with less than 18% of the eligible workforce getting promoted.

Meanwhile, accept the praise from your colleagues and allow that to satisfy your thirst for recognition. Have you gotten a cash or time-off award? Promotion is not the only way to reward excellent performance. And if you like your job, let that be its own reward. There are people out there making more money who hate what they're doing. In the long run, who do you think is worse off?

Consider this: you may be doing a great job, but the job itself may not support a higher grade. Some work roles max out at a particular level, and to continue to get promoted you would need to switch to a different field. Check the Work Role Finder (**go work roles**) to learn more about the competencies, training and performance expected at each level of your work role.

Last of all, be patient. Promotions are infrequent so focus on gaining new skills and continual learning. The feedback you were given about it being "too soon since your last promotion" could mean that you haven't gained any new skills since you've been at this grade. You have a whole career ahead of you, and years to rise up through the ranks. It takes time to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for the next level. Diversify, ask for feedback on ways to improve, and do what you love.

Before you climb on top of your desk, beat your chest, and yell, "Show me the money!" do some hard thinking about how ambitious you are. Decide whether A) you like your job and the field you're in and can be content with that - even if it means being promoted at a slower pace, or B) want to advance quickly at all costs. Let the answer to that determine what course of action you'll take. And remember, it could be worse - you could be stuck at the "terrible twos"!

Best of luck to you in your career.

Edda
